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ABSTRACT

Two approaches to teacher education program development and student teacher evaluation are contrasted, the "expert" approach and the "consensus-responding" approach. The expert approach focuses on what is believed to be the best or "right way" to teach. This approach specifies teaching skills that faculty members (experts) believe describe appropriate teacher performance. A program is developed and implemented that is intended to enable trainees to perform these skills. Following student teaching, trainees are rated on how well their performance on the prescribed set of teaching skills matched their supervisors' concept of "ideal" performance. The consensus-responding approach to program development and student evaluation is based on the belief that all individuals involved in the program are constantly searching for more appropriate teaching skills, and modifying the concept of appropriate teacher performance. A master list of approximately 75 to 100 teaching skills appropriate to a variety of teaching styles is used, and student teachers are evaluated on their use of specific skills appropriate to their prefered teaching styles. This paper presents an analysis of each of these approaches and discusses the strengths and problem areas of each. (JD)

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Contrasting Two Approaches to Developing Teacher Education Programs and Evaluating Student Teachers

Some teacher educators proudly proclaim that their teacher education programs are performance-based, while others argue vehemently against performance-based programs. The fact that teaching skills are involved in teacher education and that some skills are more important and more appropriate than other skills can neither be denied nor ignored. In most supposedly non-performance-based programs, student teachers are usually evaluated or rated on criteria that are descriptions of selected teaching skills. Rather than continuing to debate the pros and cons of performance-based teacher education, we should be trying to determine the best ways to identify the teaching skills that are to be emphasized at one or more points in teacher education programs by teacher educators, classroom teacher/supervisors and student teachers. In the following pages, I contrast two approaches to teacher education program development and student teacher evaluation -- the "Expert" Approach and the Consensus-Responding Approach.

The "Expert" Approach

Those who subscribe to the "expert" approach focus on what they believe is the best or "right" way to teach. One of the first steps in developing a teacher education program using the "expert" approach is the specification of the teaching skills that faculty members (the "experts") believe describe appropriate teacher performance.

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After a set of teaching skills is specified, a program is developed and implemented that is intended to enable trainees to perform the skills. As trainees near completion of the program, a student teaching experience is provided. After completing student teaching, trainees are rated on how well their demonstrated performance on the prescribed set of teaching skills matched their supervisors' concept of "ideal" performance.

While the "expert" approach to program development and student teacher evaluation seems to be a good approach, some problems are evident. One problem is getting faculty agreement on the teaching skills that reflect appropriate teacher performance and around which the program will be developed. In order to bring to an end the difficult and time-consuming task of specifying appropriate teaching skills, and to enable the group to get on with other phases of program development and to pursue other interests, some faculty members may quickly "agree" that certain skills should be included in the program. When this happens, those who "agree" on certain teaching skills may give lip-service to those skills, but their commitment to helping students acquire the skills is likely to be very low (Nolan, 1985, p. 14).

A second problem is that some supervisors of student teachers, especially classroom teacher/supervisors, usually do not have a hand in specifying the skills around which the teacher training program is developed. Those field-based professionals do have

ideas about what constitutes appropriate teacher performance and some of their ideas are at variance with the ideas expressed by the "expert" program developers. University faculty members aren't always right and classroom teachers aren't always wrong in their beliefs about what constitutes appropriate teacher performance.

A third problem inherent in the "expert" approach is that there is likely to be a mismatch between many of the teaching skills emphasized in the training program and what goes on in the classrooms in which students complete student teaching and other field experiences. In most instances, student teachers are a "small cog in a large wheel." They have to work with a room arrangement and classroom procedures that have been established by their classroom teacher/supervisor. In most instances, student teachers have to use the school's curriculum materials in ways that don't depart too much from the ways their classroom teacher/supervisor uses the materials. It is unrealistic to think that student teachers can make major changes in classroom settings so that the new settings will permit the use of a prescribed set of teaching skills -- many of which the classroom teacher/supervisor may never have heard of and which she may not understand when she sees the skills listed on a student teacher evaluation form.

A fourth problem with the "expert" approach is that it tends to force all trainees into a single mold. Like teacher educators and supervisors, teacher trainees also have ideas about which teaching

skills are appropriate for them. However, little provision is made in many performance-based programs for individual student differences and preferences. A set of "appropriate" teaching skills is identified by the "experts" and the skills are prescribed for or imposed upon students. According to McNergney,

> Teacher educators have often championed the individual in their rhetoric, while showing only minimal concern for teachers as individuals in their practice. In general, teacher-educators have acted as if they had the best set of methods for enabling all teachers, regardless of individual differences, to become effective and personally satisfied professionals (p.234).

Probably the most serious problem with the "expert" approach occurs when those who develop and implement the program don't practice what they preach. Most of us must agree with Evertson, Hawley, and Zlotnik (1985, p.7) who indicated that we teacher educators aren't known for serving as particularly good models for our students or for using the teaching skills that we want our students to use.

Lastly, there is the problem of program stagnation when the "expert" approach is used. Whether a set of teaching skills has been described in 20 general or high inference statements, or in dozens of explicit or low inference statements, after the

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completion of a program developed by using the "expert" approach, developers soon find that their concept of appropriate teacher performance has changed. Other, more important skills are identified and some prescribed skills no longer seem to be important. Before the ink is dry on program documents, the program is beginning to come unraveled. However, "mum" is the word. Some teacher educator "experts" would rather remain silent and not suggest changes in the teaching skills around which the program is developed than to have to go through the arduous task of redesigning the recently finished program.

The Consensus-Responding Approach

The consensus-responding approach to program development and student teacher evaluation is based on these beliefs: (1) All of us -- administrators, faculty members, university supervisors, classroom teacher/supervisors, and student teachers -- are constantly searching for more appropriate teaching skills. (2) We are constantly modifying our concept of appropriate teacher performance. (3) Appropriate teacher performance is dependent upon a number of factors, such as subject matter field, grade level, teacher personality, types of available curriculum materials, school philosophy, and community expectations. People who subscribe to these beliefs focus on what appropriate teacher performance might be in a variety of situations.

The consensus-responding approach begins with the identification of a master list of approximately 75-100 teaching skills that those involved in the program believe might reflect appropriate teacher performance in certain situations. The master list contains skills that are appropriate to a variety of teaching styles that might be used in teaching various subjects at various grade levels. The master list contains teaching skills that are supported by research and skills that are based on authority judgments. Since the broad range of skills reflect a variety of viewpoints, they vary in degree of specificity, that is, some are stated in very general terms while others are stated in explicit terms.

Initially, the master list of teaching skills is used in evaluating student teachers. During the third or fourth week of student teaching, each student teacher and her classroom and university supervisors select from the master list a specified number of skills (approximately 25 skills work well) that are appropriate to the student's preferred teaching styles and to the classroom setting in which the student is teaching. Next individualized student teaching evaluation forms that are composed of the skills that have been selected by each student teacher or her supervisors are printed by computer (Newport, 1983). At the end of student teaching, each student teacher is evaluated on her individualized set of teaching skills.

The second step in using the consensus-responding approach is to determine the percent of student teachers for whom each skill on the master list was selected as an evaluation criterion. For example, a recent analysis of the skills selected by 145 student teachers and their supervisors at Southwest Missouri State University showed that the students and supervisors believed certain skills were much more appropriate to their personal teaching styles and classroom situations than were other skills. Eight skills from the master list and the percent of the 145 student teachers for whom each skill on the master list was selected are shown below:

Demonstrated the ability to provide instruction -- to explain and demonstrate -- in clear and simple terms.	85%
Maximized student time spent on task and kept transition time and behavior problems to a minimum.	73%
Planned and conducted activities that enabled students to express their originality and creativity.	58%
Modified some component of a student's program if tests or teacher observations revealed the student had not mastered an important skill.	41%

Emphasized responsible group living and established appropriate standards of conduct.	30%
Planned learning activities that were based on individual student's learning styles.	19%
Assisted in implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for mainstreamed students.	10%
Used strategies effectively which reflect the basic tenents of open education.	2%

The third step in using the consensus-responding approach is to determine the courses in which each skill on the master list is being emphasized and how much emphasis faculty members are placing on each skill. It may be found that a high percentage of student teachers and their supervisors are selecting a certain skill for use as an evaluation criterion while little emphasis is being given to the skill by faculty members who teach methods courses. It may also be found that one or more faculty members are placing much emphasis on a skill while few student teachers and supervisors are selecting the skill to be used as an evaluation criterion. Such information is useful to faculty members in identifying areas of duplication and omission in the program, and in "trouble shooting," or finding out why certain skills that are being emphasized in methods courses are not being selected by

student teachers and classroom teacher/supervisors as evaluation criteria.

The consensus-responding approach to program development and student teacher evaluation overcomes some of the problems inherent in the "expert" approach. The consensus-responding approach is based on the assumptions that teachers are effective in a variety of ways, that they use a broad range of teaching skills, and that no two teachers use an identical set of skills. These assumptions negate the need for program developers to try to agree, or to pretend to agree on a narrow description of what they believe appropriate teacher performance is in an unknown or non-existent setting.

The consensus-responding approach does not result in all students being forced into a single "mold" that has been shaped by the program designers' concept of the "right" way to teach. Trainees in a consensus-responding program are encouraged to develop their own concept of appropriate teacher performance and to identify and nurture those teaching skills that they believe will be most effective for them in their particular situations (Newport, 1982).

The consensus-responding approach also allows student teachers and their supervisors to use evaluation criteria (the teaching skills selected from the master list) that are appropriate to the situations and conditions in which students have been placed for student teaching. Therefore, if there is a mismatch between the program developers' concept of appropriate teacher performance and

the established procedures in the classrooms in which students are student teaching, the effects of the mismatch are minimized.

When the consensus-responding approach is used, there is little likelihood that program stagnation will occur because data are generated that lead program developers to question and modify their concept of appropriate teacher performance and the content of their courses. For example, methods professors who are promoting open education are led to reflect on the content of their courses when they find that the percent of student teachers and supervisors that has selected certain skills related to open education has declined to less than two percent while the percent that is selecting certain other skills is steadily increasing. The consensus-responding approach results in each teaching skill "competing in the market place."

The consensus-responding approach to program design is an open and on-going process. Program designers do not describe what appropriate teacher performance might be at a given time and place. Neither do they think of their program as being finished or completely developed. Changes are made in the master list of teaching skils and in various program components whenever it is believed that such changes will result in an improved program.

Probably the strongest feature of the consensus-responding approach to program development and student teacher evaluation is that all persons involved -- administrators, faculty members,

supervisors and students -- are able to place some emphasis on those teaching skills that reflect their current concept of appropriate teacher performance. This feature results in an environment in which all involved persons' ideas are respected and nurtured. According to recent research in the business world, this is a key to excellence (Cross, 1984; Rogers, Talbot, & Cosgrove, 1984).

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